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ABSTRACT

This paper reports that black male students enrolled in Texas community colleges generally have a lower rate of degree completion than that of their white counterparts. However, some institutions have higher rates of black male graduation than do others. The purposes of this study were to ascertain which Texas public community colleges have been able to graduate the highest percentage of black males and to analyze the factors contributing to that achievement. An institutional questionnaire designed to elicit information regarding policies and/or practices directly related to the retention of black male students was mailed to colleges that have highest (top 25%) and lowest (bottom 25%) black male graduation rates. Sixty-one colleges were involved in this mailing (67% response rate from top quartile and 47% response rate from bottom quartile). Then, on-site, qualitative case studies were conducted at one institution each from the top and bottom quartiles. Institutional settings, policies, procedures, programs, and culture were examined in the case study campus for clues concerning their black male retention rate. The following retention strategies were identified as possible contributive factors to the high-retention rate: freshman-only advising, orientation courses for credit, monitoring of at-risk student attendance, targeting minority groups with specific retention plans, and required tutorial and mentoring activities for certain at-risk students. (Contains 31 references.) (GC)

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THE RETENTION OF BLACK MALE STUDENTS IN TEXAS PUBLIC COMMUNITY COLLEGES

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Abstract: The purposes of this study were to ascertain which Texas public community colleges have been able to graduate the highest percentages of black males and to analyze the factors contributing to that achievement. An institutional questionnaire was developed, designed to elicit information regarding policies and/or practices directly related to the retention of black male students and mailed to each college in the top and bottom quartile. On-site case studies were conducted at one institution each from the top and bottom quartiles. The focus of the case studies was to examine the setting, policies, procedures, programs, and culture of each campus for clues concerning their black male retention rate. Data collection was from interviews, observations, and collection of institutional artifacts. This study identified several retention strategies which differentiate institutions in the top quartile of black, male student graduation rate from institutions in the bottom quartile.

The origin of the American community college movement, in its present form, generally has been attributed to William Rainey Harper of the University of Chicago (Monroe, 1972). The impetus for the movement was that further education was needed beyond high school for those aspiring to technical careers, and secondly, that these first two years would provide an additional source of qualified university applicants (Monroe, 1972). Alongside an unparalleled boom in facilities construction, controversy began over the mission and accessibility of community colleges. "Two-year colleges have long been touted as agencies for the democratization of opportunity in higher education" (Lucas, 1996). Historically less costly, more numerous, and less restrictive in their admissions, they have sought to make higher education available to virtually everyone.

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The question of access has been intensely debated. Some critics argue that open admissions cannot be reconciled with academic standards, and that lowered standards are not consistent with an efficient use of shrinking public finances. Other critics feel that minority students in particular still do not have equal access to higher education. Texas has made an extensive commitment to its state-supported, two-year colleges and currently has fifty community college districts providing geographic accessibility to 95% of the population. Texas community colleges have traditionally offered a wide variety of courses for transfer preparation, certificate or associate degree programs, upgrading of work skills, new technology skills, and personal improvement. They have maintained open enrollment policies and offered a range of remedial courses for the under-prepared student (Facts, 1998). Texas community colleges have attempted to reflect the state's ethnic diversity in their student enrollment, and this has become a subject of intense debate. In the fall of 1997, 70% of all Texas freshman and sophomore students were enrolled in community colleges, and over one-half of those were attending on a part-time basis (Facts, 1998).

One of the measures of student success at community colleges has been graduation rate and/or transfer to a senior college. Nationwide, African American students have been disproportionately more likely to enroll at community colleges versus four-year institutions, but have tended to earn lower grade point averages and to have higher attrition rates (Ellison & Martin, 1999). African American students have also exhibited a lower rate of associate degree completion and transfer (Garza, 1994). According to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (1999), the graduation

rate of black males in Texas public community colleges is lower than that of their white male counterparts. Some of these institutions, however, have higher rates of black male graduation than do others.

The purposes of this study were to ascertain which Texas public community colleges have been able to graduate the highest percentages of black males and to analyze the factors contributing to such achievement. Specifically, the study attempted to identify the Texas public community colleges with the highest percentages of black male graduations and the features that enhance retention and graduation of black males at community colleges. The following research questions were developed to address the purposes of this study. Which Texas public community colleges have the highest percentages of black male graduates? What are the features that differentiate between community colleges with higher graduation rates and those with lower rates?

Texas does not reap maximum benefits from its public community colleges when students who enroll fail to complete their course of study. Community colleges are heavily vested in both vocational/technical programs and in preparation courses for transfer to a four-year college or university. About two-thirds of all associate degrees are earned by students in job-preparation programs, and about 23% of community college students in this country transfer to a 4-year institution (Cohen, 1990). Admission to community colleges is open to all those who graduate from high school, and community colleges tend to serve those with less academic preparation and those of lower socioeconomic status (Dougherty, 1991). Approximately 46% of community

college students come from the lowest socioeconomic status quartile (Cohen, 1990). Even so, black students are still disproportionately under-represented (Allen, 1988).

One reason for failure to graduate is inadequate preparation for higher education, and black students often attend high schools characterized by high drop-out rates, student scholastic indifference and low attendance levels (Orfield, 1988). This may result in a sizeable difference between what was learned in high school and what is required as preparation for college. Remedial courses are designed to help bridge this gap, and nearly half of all mathematics and English classes taught at community colleges are at the remedial level (Cohen, 1990). However, repeating what seems to be high school material may prove discouraging to some students. Also, the cost involved for tuition, books, transportation, lost work-time, child care and other expenses may rise prohibitively as the time required to graduate increases.

Financial need is a determinant in enrollment and also a factor in attrition. The need to work often forces the student into part-time attendance, and part-time students are more likely than full-time students to leave school (Feldman, 1993). Some students are forced financially into discontinuous enrollment. They drop out of school for a semester or more, until they can afford to enroll again, a process that is referred to as "stop-outs" (Grosset, 1992). Students who have lower scores on the SAT are also more likely to leave, even though the most reliable predictor of retention is the high school GPA (Feldman, 1993). Generally speaking, black students tend to have greater financial needs and to score lower on the SAT, and a greater percentage of black students drop out of school than whites (Feldman, 1993).

Other factors are also associated with student retention. Patterson (1993) noted that students with undefined or unrealistic goals should be referred to career counseling. Definitive goals, concerning a chosen profession and why that field was selected, are positively correlated with educational persistence (Meznek, 1987). Living on campus is also a plus to student retention but is usually more expensive than commuting, especially if the college is nearby. Valez and Javalgi (1987) observed that the combination of living on campus and being involved socially in campus activities increases the probability of degree completion.

Efforts to retain students generally fall into an administrative or a faculty approach. Administrative efforts are policies, procedures and programs designed to meet the needs of students. Counseling, scheduling, financial aid, payment terms, internships, housing arrangements and many other programs can enhance retention. For example, many part-time students are negatively affected by the scheduling and the manner in which programs and services are provided by the typical community college (Al-Habeeb, 1990). To enhance retention, services should be interconnected to help create a learning environment (McKeon, 1989). The faculty approach to student retention involves such things as hiring procedures, minority faculty recruitment, and ongoing assessment of teaching effectiveness (Clark & Crawford, 1992). The methods chosen for assessing effectiveness are also important. For example, student evaluation of course content and instruction contributes to the sense of belonging, certainly a factor in retention (Kendrin, 1993).

Although black students were graduating from high school in higher percentages than ever before, the number enrolling in college actually fell about 7% between 1976 and 1985 (Lang, 1992). Lang attributes this, in part, to lower socioeconomic background, decreased quality in educational preparation, rising tuition costs and a lack of serious investment in equal opportunity by some institutions. Garza (1994) reports that black students are underrepresented among students receiving college degrees, and a review of the literature offers many different programs for the recruitment, retention and academic success of black students. Halcon (1989) even reports a number of specific, successful programs, which may be applicable to multiple settings.

During the three year period of this study, Texas, public community colleges awarded academic associate degrees to only 2.4% of the black, male students they enrolled as first-time, degree-seeking freshmen (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 1999). According to the American Society for Training and Development, more than 65% of all jobs in this country will require some education beyond high school by the end of the year 2000 (Myran, Zeiss & Howdyshell, 1995). Therefore, Texas, public community colleges need to do a better job of retaining black, male students or risk the development of a permanent black, economic underclass within the state. A review of the literature has uncovered a lack of research focusing on why some colleges do a better job of black male retention than others.

Some research has shown the problem to be related to personal attributes, such as a lack of positive self-esteem, external locus of control, and low achievement

motivation. Other researchers have cited cultural factors as a basic cause of college difficulties for black males. Situational barriers to the retention of black males in college are factors such as poverty, lack of adequate high school preparation, and being a minority student in a predominantly white institution. Certainly, financial problems are a factor in obtaining a college education, and many aspiring black students have limited financial resources.

Many other researchers have focused on institutional barriers to retention, such as a failure to accommodate minority student needs. Alternatives to standardized admission tests, flexibility in tuition payment and course scheduling, and the employment of minority faculty are some of the solutions for barriers cited. Much research has been focused on more specific causes of black male dropouts. The focus of this study was to discover what successful retention policies and/or procedures are used by Texas, public community colleges that have the highest black, male student retention rates. If indeed these colleges do have unique features that help raise black male graduation rates, then some of these retention strategies may be transferable to community colleges with lower rates.

Methodology

The phases of this investigation included the determination of graduation rates and the identification of institutions in the top and bottom quartiles, based on graduation rate. In addition, the study included the development and dissemination of an

institutional questionnaire, collection of survey data, in-depth case studies of two institutions, and analysis of data.

Determination of Graduation Rates

The initial step in the determination of graduation rates was to obtain data from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB). The data collected and utilized for the calculation of institutional graduation rates included the academic years 1995-96, 1996-97, and 1997-98 for all reporting community colleges. The graduation rate was determined by dividing the enrollment of first-time, black male, degree-seeking freshmen, at each Texas public community college, into the number of black male students receiving academic, associate degrees from that institution during the same time period. The time period selected was the most recent three-year statistical report available from the THECB. A total of 61 public, two-year institutions were included in this portion of the study. Nine campuses were excluded. Three were excluded because they are specialized and not directly comparable, and six because the THECB data, during the target time-period, were insufficient to include them.

Identification of Top and Bottom Quartiles

Once a graduation rate had been determined for each of the colleges selected, the institutions were arranged in a list from highest to lowest. The top quartile consisted of the most successful group of institutions in graduating black male students, and the bottom quartile, the least successful. The remainder of the investigation focused upon a comparison of these two groups, to determine what, if anything, the more successful

institutions were doing to promote black male graduation that the less successful schools were not doing.

Development of Institutional Questionnaire

A questionnaire was developed to identify institutional policies and/or practices that affect the graduation rate, with specific attention directed to the factors that enhance the retention of black male students. The initial questions were developed from a similar study conducted in New Jersey in 1997 (Wellbrock) and from a literature review of common retention practices. The questionnaire was piloted with three community colleges for scope and clarity. Most of the comments received from these reviews concerned the clarity of the questions and/or answering instructions. The validity of the survey instrument was addressed through the use of the questionnaire method by other researchers in this same area of education (Donaldson, 1999; Dorsey, 1995; Spradley, 1996; Wellbrock, 1997). Reliability was addressed by using questions that were independent of any specific institution and by conducting the pilot test. In its final form, the questionnaire included both forced-choice and open-ended questions addressing common retention practices, such as counseling, mentoring, tutoring, remedial courses, pre-enrollment, summer catch-up programs, matching course assignments to standard test scores, and follow-up procedures for at-risk students.

Collection of Institutional Data

The questionnaires were mailed to the President of each institution ranked in the top and bottom quartiles by percentage of black male graduation rate. Follow-up telephone calls, letters, and email, were all utilized to enhance the return rate of

completed questionnaires. Additional questionnaires were also mailed, at later dates, to some institutions that had been unresponsive to the first mailing. A total of 67% were completed and returned from the top quartile institutions. A total of 47% were completed and returned from the bottom quartile colleges.

Multiple Case Studies

To enhance the data gathered with the institutional questionnaire, on-site qualitative case studies were conducted at one institution each from the top and bottom quartiles in black male graduation rate. A qualitative method was chosen, since the questionnaires could not provide the meaning, value, or significance (Meloy, 1994) to the students of the various institutional features identified. The qualitative approach permitted the study of the selected institutions in their natural setting (Creswell, 1998) through the observation of, and verbal interaction with, students, staff, and others involved with the college. The case study method was chosen in order to examine the reaction of these individuals to their institution's policies and programs that were designed to enhance the retention and graduation of students in general, and of black male students in particular. The case study approach also facilitated a comparison of the retention/graduation practices between one college and another. Both cases were characterized by clear boundaries in place and time (Creswell, 1998), the entire main campus of each institution, and the time required to collect the desired data. Much contextual material was available to describe the campus setting, and a wide array of information, from a variety of sources, could be gathered to provide an in-depth picture

of retention and graduation features. Under study were the perceptions, attitudes, and procedures concerning the retention of black male students to graduation.

Data were gathered from interviews and other verbal interactions with students, staff, and others involved with the two colleges. Additional data were gathered through the observation of students, staff, and others, as they moved about the campus and interacted with one another. Finally, the method of triangulation involved the utilization of other materials, such as brochures, catalogs, syllabi, and written rules and procedures, to illuminate and reinforce the verbal data and observations.

Case One

Case one is a community college located in a relatively small city (population under 20,000) in a sparsely populated, rural Texas county. This college was chosen for study because it was in the top quartile for black male graduation rate during the time period selected for this research. The campus seems very spacious, but the buildings are concentrated in one area and are within close proximity to one another. Walking distance between buildings appears to be minimal. The physical plant demonstrates a mixture of traditional and modern architecture. Grass and large shade trees are abundant in a somewhat hilly terrain. Parking is apparently ample for both staff and students and it is relatively close to the classroom buildings. The campus is located in the city but traffic does not seem to be a problem, even during the rush hours. Inside, the buildings appear clean and well-lighted, with wide hallways and large classrooms. Although most of the buildings are older than 50 years, they look well-maintained. The

campus also has several newer buildings, probably constructed during the last 15 or 20 years.

The staff members visited had relatively large offices. The cafeteria appears to be spacious, attractively clean, and furnished, and the menu included a variety of choices. Many of the staff were seen eating lunch in the cafeteria, even though a variety of commercial, eating establishments are near the campus. The bookstore is centrally located on the campus, contains a variety of books and other items, and the employees seem friendly and helpful. The administration building appears spacious, and the employees demonstrated efforts to be courteous and helpful. This building is also used for the registration process. The athletic facilities and the student residence halls are older buildings, but appear well-maintained. The college has residence hall space for about 350 students, including the athletes. The college has other campuses, each much smaller, newer, and more modern in design than the main campus. The black male graduation rates of these campuses are included in the overall rate of the college, but the main campus was selected for this case study, because it provides the policy and culture of the whole college.

The college conducted an orientation and registration process for incoming freshman students in July. A group of 50 to 75 students attended this session, many accompanied by parents. The group appeared to be primarily Caucasian, with few minority students evident. In a typical year on this campus, a student body of less than 2000 is 8 to 10% minority, and a substantial number of these are athletes and foreign students. A second session was conducted in August, just prior to the beginning of the

fall semester. The orientation ceremony lasted 30 to 45 minutes, with several speakers, each discussing a specific topic. Topics covered a wide range of information important to students and their parents. Religious activities, free lunches, recreation facilities, extracurricular program opportunities, testing, financial aid, counseling, and bookstore policy were all addressed, as well as many other subjects. The overall theme of the speakers was for students to "get involved in the activities of the college, get to know your teachers, and ask for help if you need it." The program concluded with each student meeting with a staff member to complete a preliminary degree plan. This plan is a necessary prerequisite to registration, and each student must see an advisor before every subsequent registration to monitor the plan's progress.

Orientation took place in an auditorium, but registration was conducted in the main hall of the administration building. Ample staff members were available to keep registration lines short. Numerous student aids in special registration T-shirts circulated among the incoming freshmen and their parents, answering questions, distributing literature on various programs, and directing the flow of registrants. These volunteer aids also acted as group leaders, showing groups of new students about the campus. The entire process seemed to be student friendly, and no evidence of frustration among staff, parents, or students was observed. The new students were given a number of incentives; such as doughnuts, candy, and college T-shirts; to make the experience more pleasurable. Student identification cards and parking stickers were issued free.

Several of the staff were questioned concerning the attitudes and procedures of the college pertaining to the retention of black male students. The college has no black

teachers, but it does have several black administrators in key positions. The Director of Student Support Services said that tutoring is the most important function contributing to retention. The college offers federally funded, student support services, with free tutoring for low-income, first-generation students. Teachers and administrators take a hands on approach with at-risk students, communicating between faculty, student, and support services staff. Apparently the college has a family tradition, and many of the students have parents and grandparents who attended here also. The Vice President for Student Affairs said that students are pushed to file for graduation. The registrar sends a letter to any student with 45 semester hours, or more, requesting them to file for graduation. Even former students with 45 hours, or more, are contacted and urged to complete their degree plans. Whenever possible, schedules and/or courses are changed to facilitate graduation.

The college also employs an admissions committee, composed of a vice president and various administrators, deans, faculty, and counselors. Any student with a GPA of less than a "C" must interview with this committee, before they can enroll for another semester. Many students are assigned a monitor, either a faculty or staff member, who consults with the student's instructors about grades and attendance. No one is assigned more than five students to monitor at any one time. The counselors have various duties, including general, academic, and vocational counseling, as well as counseling the athletes. Each major sport has its own counselor, and many of the athletes are assigned mentors as well. Some counselors serve on the admissions committee and some aid in recruiting through their relationships with the athletes.

Approximately 20 black male students on this campus were interviewed. The interviews took place in various situations, from the cafeteria to the residence hall rooms. Most of the students were chosen on the basis of available opportunity, but a few were recommended by students already interviewed. Almost all interviews took place on the campus. An effort was made to limit these conversations to sophomores, since they had more experience with the school and had already returned once for a new academic year. About one-third of the students were interviewed several times, for clarification and/or additional information. Almost from the start, recurring themes appeared in their answers to such questions as "What do you like most about this college?" A few had experience with another college, but most did not. The themes centered around small classes, helpful teachers, counselors, and a friendly atmosphere on the campus. One young man commented, "The black males who drop out here do so because they don't want to give the effort, not because of the school or the personnel."

Virtually every black, male student interviewed mentioned small classes and helpful teachers. "Most faculty come to help the student out, and you can always tell those teachers. They have a positive attitude. Teachers speak to the students and are nice to them, even when things aren't going well. They will stay after class and talk with you, if you have questions or problems." One young, black man said that the teachers are "understanding and will help you catch up if you get behind." These comments were typical of those made about the teaching faculty. Several students contrasted this

with other colleges, where the classes were large and the teachers always seemed too busy.

Counselors were frequently given as a reason for student satisfaction with the college. Several black male students who were interviewed played varsity sports. They liked the fact that the teams had counselors. They said that "different teams may have different needs," and the "counselors know the university programs and requirements and help with selection and transfer." Other students interviewed said that having enough counselors helps a lot. One student said "it's just like in church, when someone takes time for you." Another student provided an overall summary, when he said, "it's the little things that make this a good school. They don't mind helping you out. They don't look at you different."

Case Two

Case two was chosen because this college was in the bottom quartile in percentage of black male graduations for the selected time period. In some ways, it is almost the opposite of case one. The college serves a densely populated, wealthy district, and the main campus resides in a metropolitan area (city with a population over 200,000). The campus has almost 300 residence hall rooms, but it is primarily a commuter school. Classes are conducted in a very large single building, with designated module areas for each academic field. The central area of the building (immediately inside the main entrance) contains the bookstore, cafeteria, fast food restaurant and vending machines, auditorium/theater, counseling, human resources (job placement), registration, cashier, career/transfer services for degree plans and

resumes, and a staffed information desk, complete with catalogs, schedules, and brochures.

The halls are wide, and the second floor is a mezzanine on both sides above the first-floor hall. The ceiling is actually a skylight roof. The building is spacious and well lighted. Large parking areas are located in relatively close proximity to the building. The area surrounding the main building and the parking lots is spacious, landscaped, and well lighted. The campus also contains several athletic areas, with small buildings, tennis courts, and a baseball stadium. Classrooms are large, well lighted, and nicely furnished. The central area of the main building has a tile floor and a large fountain. The rest of the building is carpeted, with stuffed, modern chairs distributed in the halls.

The atmosphere was indicative of a commuter school. Some students talked in pairs or trios, with few larger groups. Most students remained as solitary individuals, going to and from class. The students observed were predominantly Caucasian, mixed with Asians, Indians (or Pakistanis), and a few African Americans. The majority of the black students observed were female, with no groups of black students larger than three. The black males interviewed tended to be suspicious of the questions, until they were reassured that the researcher was not connected to the institution. Most were then very cooperative, and three or four appeared to have foreign accents. Students were selected for interviews on the basis of opportunity, as was the process in case one.

The answers received from the black male students, concerning why they did or did not like the college, tended to be repetitive almost from the start, as was the

experience in case one. Although a variety of answers were received concerning why students had chosen this college, the most common reasons given were that the school has cheaper tuition and a good academic reputation. Other common reasons were that the teachers "teach what you need and not a lot of fluff," and the classes are small. Only two repetitive complaints were received about the institution. One was that the halls are too crowded and the lines are too long, since all the classes are in the same building. The second complaint referred to too few campus activities. Being a commuter school, few campus organizations sponsor and/or promote such activities.

Initial attempts to interview staff members were discouraging. The chain of command is apparently more important at this college than in some other educational institutions. However, after the Vice President met with the researcher, everyone else was more than happy to provide information. The institution participates in a federal grant designed to attract minority students to math and science. Among the retention measures employed are counseling, mentoring, teaching assistants, and a summer bridge program designed to reduce the gap between high school and college. The bridge program also facilitates the transfer of courses between this institution and a specific senior college.

The college appears to have a strong orientation program, although it is not mandatory. The program stresses study skills, differences between high school and college course work, and the importance of involvement. All classes have a laboratory, or some other interactive and/or collaborative learning component to encourage involvement. The college also has a learning community program, which involves a

cohort of the same students taking two or more classes together, linked around a central theme. The staff indicated that research shows this to be effective in retention. Orientation and involvement strategies are based on the assumption that "learning is not a spectator sport." Academic advising attempts to ensure that student expectations equal reality, and that the student understands what he/she is getting into when selecting a course of study.

During the first six weeks of each fall semester, student ambassadors call new students to see how they are doing. The purpose is not to recruit, but to encourage and to answer questions. Also, follow-up calls are made to students who have quit school. The college has joined with a Hispanic organization to conduct a "youth leadership academy." A high percentage of the academy graduates go on to attend the college. The college also does some recruiting outreach in minority neighborhoods, but it is aimed at the poor, and not at specific races. However, since black and Hispanic students make up most of the poor who enroll, they are the primary beneficiaries. The staff remarked that the racial mix of the college student body matches the mix of the district population as a whole. This is apparently a source of pride to the institution.

Data Analysis

Questionnaires

The questionnaire data were scrutinized for detailed, descriptive information regarding institutional policies and/or practices directly related to the retention of black male students. Practices, such as mentoring; tutoring; remedial courses; and pre-

enrollment, summer, catch-up programs were anticipated, but features unique to specific institutions were also expected and noted. These descriptive data were compiled and utilized to provide a basis for the qualitative portion of the study. The primary task of analyzing the qualitative data concerned the collapsing of the verbal information collected into distinct categories. For example, reasons given by students for remaining enrolled at a particular college might concern family wishes, economic factors, academic considerations, friends, campus location, or some other classifiable cause. The categorizing of the information collected facilitated an overall interpretation of the institutional perceptions, attitudes, and procedures concerning retention and graduation.

The questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part concerns institutional practices for the retention of students in general. Table 1 contains a summary of the part 1 questionnaire data. Three strategies seem worth noting in Table 1 when comparing top and bottom quartile institutions. Freshman-only advising programs were conducted by 50% of the top quartile colleges, which rated the student retention value of these programs at 2.60 on a scale of 1 to 3. Only 43% of the bottom quartile schools had similar programs, and they rated their value to retention at only 1.14. Orientation courses for credit were offered by 50% of the top quartile colleges. Only 29% of the bottom quartile institutions did so, even though both groups rated the value to student retention at 2.50 or above. A final comparison worth noting from part 1 concerned staff development. About 60% of both the top and bottom colleges reported conducting staff development programs designed to enhance retention and graduation. However, 57%

of the bottom quartile schools included a "preservation of standards" component in their programs, while only 40% of the top quartile institutions did so. All of the colleges in both groups conducted basic skills testing and class placement consistent with test scores. A variety of tests were reported. The top three, in order of their usage, were the TASP, ASSET, and COMPASS. One or more of these three were used by almost every institution. Also, 100% of the colleges in both groups conducted class orientation and tutorial programs, job placement services, work-study programs, and student academic and financial counseling.

Table 1
Comparison of Top and Bottom Quartile Institutions Concerning General Student Retention Practices

Strategy	Top Quartile (TQ) % Yes	Bottom Quartile (BQ) % Yes	TQ Perceived Value to Retention (1-3)	BQ Perceived Value to Retention (1-3)
1. Basic skills testing	100	100	2.75	2.71
2. Class placement consistent with test scores	100	100	1.90	2.86
3. Orientation to classes	100	100	2.60	2.71
4. Orientation to extra-curricular activities	70	71	2.38	2.25
5. Freshman only advising	50	43	2.60	1.14
6. Tutorial programs	100	100	2.30	2.71
7. Job placement services	100	100	2.20	2.14
8. Work-study programs	100	100	2.40	2.57
9. Orientation for credit	50	29	2.60	2.50
10. Orientation for minorities only	0	0	- - -	- - -
11. Counseling services	100	100	2.70	2.57
12. Staff Development programs for retention enhancement	60	57	2.33	2.25
Preservation of standards urged	40	57	- - -	- - -

Part 2 of the questionnaire concerned retention practices and procedures specifically targeting at-risk groups. Students may be classified as at risk for a variety of reasons, including cultural, economic, academic, and/or language difficulties. Table 2 summarizes the forced-choice data from part 2 of the questionnaire. What is interesting to note is that only about 70% of both the top and bottom quartile schools specifically identify at-risk students at initial enrollment. However, several noteworthy differences, as seen in table 2, exist between the two groups of institutions. First, 60% of the top quartile schools maintain required tutorial programs. Only 29% of the bottom quartile

Table 2
Comparison of Top and Bottom Quartile Institutions Concerning At-Risk Student Retention Practices

Strategy	Top Quartile (TQ) % Yes	Bottom Quartile (BQ) % Yes	TQ Perceived Value to Retention (1-3)	BQ Perceived Value to Retention (1-3)
1. Math and language developmental courses	100	100	2.00	2.57
2. Required tutorial programs	60	29	1.40	3.00
3. Individual counseling	90	86	2.43	2.80
4. Tracking test scores consistency with placement	80	71	2.62	2.20
5. Required meetings with advisor	40	14	3.00	3.00
6. Attendance monitoring	70	43	2.33	2.00
7. Retention strategies for minority groups only	30	14	3.00	2.00

schools do so, even though they rate the perceived value to retention of required tutoring at 3.00 on a 1 to 3 scale. Second, 40% of the top quartile schools require certain at-risk students to meet periodically with their advisors. These students might include those on scholastic probation or conditional placement in certain courses. Only 14% of the bottom quartile schools required advisor meetings, even though they also rated the value to retention of this practice at 3.00. Third, 70% of the top quartile schools monitored at-risk student attendance, whereas only 43% of the bottom quartile colleges did so. Finally, 30% of the high retention institutions and 14% of the low retention group targeted minority groups with some specific strategy or strategies for retention purposes. The most prevalent targeting criteria were financial and/or English language difficulties. No retention policies targeted specific racial groups at any institution reported in this study.

Case Studies

Two bounded, in-depth, qualitative case studies were also conducted to answer Research Question 2. One study was conducted on a campus from the top quartile in black, male student graduation and one on a campus from the bottom quartile. The focus of the case studies was to examine the setting, policies, procedures, programs, and culture of each campus for clues concerning each institution's success with black male graduation. Data were collected from multiple sources, such as observations of and interviews with students, faculty, counselors, administrators, residence hall supervisors, bookstore employees, campus organization leaders, and parents. These data contained descriptions, opinions, perceptions, and other personal information germane to the purpose of the study. The understanding and perception of others is interpretive, rather than quantitative, and necessitates a qualitative analysis. Additional information came from course catalogs, class schedules, school papers, bulletin boards, syllabi, brochures and various student hand-outs.

A direct comparison between the two case studies was very difficult because the institutions are so different from one another. However, the study first reviews the perceived retention strong points of each case, and then makes such a comparison. The comparison attempts to identify features of case one that enhance the institution's black male graduation rate that are not utilized by case two, which has a lower rate.

Case one is a relatively small, two-year institution located in a city of less than 20,000 people. The researcher was informed that many of the students live on or near the campus, carry a full course load, and plan to graduate from the college. The

campus culture appears to be close knit, friendly, and inclusive. The most prevalent reasons expressed by students for continuing to enroll at this institution were small classes, helpful instructors, counselors, and a friendly student body. This college employs several strategies for at-risk student retention. First, the faculty tries to assure incoming students that they are welcome and important to the institution. Second, the college maintains a continuing effort to promote student graduation. Third, the college stresses counseling and tutoring for at-risk students. Finally, an admissions committee is utilized to ensure that any student with less than a "C" average is assigned to a mentor, a tutor, class attendance monitoring, or whatever actions seem necessary to help the student succeed.

Case two is a relatively large community college located in a city of over 200,000 population. The researcher was told that part-time students constitute a sizeable portion of the student body, and that many students are enrolled in courses designed to up-date present job skills or to retrain for other jobs. Many of these students have already earned associate's or higher degrees. The overall impression of the campus culture is that most of the students are present to be educated, and not to visit with friends. Most of the students interviewed said their academic goal is to transfer to a four-year college. However, several said they were trying to raise their GPA or that they were taking job skill courses. The most prevalent answers received from black, male students concerning why they continued to enroll at this college were small classes, faculty teaching only what was needed, and cheaper tuition.

This institution also employs several strategies for at-risk student retention. First, the college utilizes counseling; mentoring; teaching assistants; and a summer bridge program, to bridge the gap between high school and college. Second, the institution participates in a federal grant program designed to attract minority students to science and math. Third, all classes are directed to include a collaborative or interactive learning component to give students a sense of involvement. Fourth, the college conducts an orientation program that stresses study skills, degree planning, and involvement. Fifth, the college offers a cohort program in which a number of students take several classes together. Sixth, student volunteers call each new student during his/her first semester to answer questions and to offer encouragement. Finally, the institution sponsors several outreach efforts designed to recruit students in poor neighborhoods.

A comparison of the perceived retention strong points of case one and case two reveals several features of case one, designed to enhance the graduation rate of at-risk students, that are not utilized by case two, which has a lower black male graduation rate. Several of these features could be implemented by virtually any Texas, public community college to enhance the black, male graduation rate. These features are as follows:

- an emphasis on freshman orientation to help students feel welcome and important to the college;
- an emphasis on counseling and tutoring services for at-risk students;
- utilization of a committee to ensure that any student with less than a "C" average is assigned to a mentor, a tutor, class attendance monitoring, or whatever actions seem necessary to help the student succeed; and,
- a continuing effort to promote student graduation.

Two additional, perceived retention features of case one, not noted in case two, were a close knit, friendly campus culture and helpful instructors. These features, however, may not necessarily be implemented easily at other institutions.

Conclusions

If Texas public community colleges are to graduate more black male students, then more successful measures need to be employed to retain black male students in school. Student retention in general, and black male student retention in particular, is a result of many factors, and only a limited number of these factors are under institutional control. However, this study has identified a number of strategies that are presently being utilized by colleges to exert a positive influence on student retention. Several of these strategies are being employed by a substantially greater number of institutions in the top quartile in black male graduation rates, than by colleges in the bottom quartile. This suggests a conclusion that colleges with lower rates of black male graduation do not employ as many of these retention strategies, which explains their lower graduation rates. The strategies that differentiate institutions in the top quartile from institutions in the bottom quartile include freshman-only advising, orientation courses for credit, required tutorial programs and meetings with advisors for certain at-risk students, monitoring of at-risk student attendance, and targeting minority groups with specific retention plans.

The research also demonstrated that the most influential institutional strategies concerning the retention of black male students are the measures designed to identify

at-risk students at enrollment and to monitor their academic progress. One method of monitoring progress is the admissions committee. This committee meets with every student, who has less than a "C" average, prior to his/her re-enrollment for another semester. The committee then assigns, for each of these students, whatever measures it deems desirable to enhance the student's chances for success. All of these strategies have been utilized by community colleges with higher rates of black male graduation.

Finally, based upon faculty and black male student comments at an institution in the top quartile, the research shows that a helpful, understanding faculty; counseling services that are advertised and utilized; and a friendly, inclusive student body are important influences specific to the retention of black, male students. A college cannot guarantee a friendly, inclusive student body, but it can provide a helpful, understanding faculty, and advertise its counseling services.

Socioeconomic and cultural factors may influence what institutional leaders feel is necessary to retain black male students, and the environment surrounding the institution may affect what retention measures they deem advisable. For example, a lower socioeconomic environment, as in case one, can influence administrators to more aggressively create and promote retention strategies. Conversely, a higher socioeconomic environment and a suburban culture, as in case two, may tend to have the opposite effect. Hence, the culture and the apparently predominant socioeconomic status of the surrounding community may be a retention factor for black male students.

Implications for Practice

Texas public community colleges that seek to enhance their black male student graduation rates should focus more attention on the identification and utilization of retention strategies. Freshman-only advising, orientation for credit, required tutoring, required advisory meetings, and targeting and monitoring of at-risk students are retention strategies that many institutions should consider.

A helpful, understanding faculty implies instructors who take the time necessary to work with students and to be available for discussions, questions, and requests outside of class. Many students, especially at-risk students, may not make office appointments. Counseling services are of little value if they are not utilized. Counseling services, such as academic, financial, and personal counseling are perceived to be important to student retention by both students and institutions. However, often the problem is how to get students to utilize the counselors. Advertising counseling services and convincing students to use such services, usually begins at orientation in most colleges. In addition, services need to be continually presented to students on bulletin boards, by instructors and student services staff, and by anyone involved with monitoring at-risk or probationary student progress. Otherwise, many students may not seek help and simply drop out of school. The college cannot provide a friendly student body by institutional decree. The college can, however, provide friendly staff and faculty members, as role models to the students, and support student activities that promote inclusiveness.

Some retention strategies require institutional investment. Small classes, available counselors, and low tuition costs are all financial considerations. However, if in the future, intensified competition occurs between colleges for the available students, then such opportunities to gain an edge in student retention become increasingly more important. Helpful instructors and courses that cover only needed content are within the power of any institutional faculty. Instructor helpfulness and course content are a matter of attitude and preparation. Finally, the information necessary for the identification of students considered at risk, due to financial problems, minority status, and/or cultural or language difficulties, is available to most colleges at enrollment. What is needed, then, is a program that monitors at-risk student progress and intervenes with counseling and/or mentoring when deemed necessary or desirable.

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Vita

Frank S. Glenn earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Physics from Texas A&M University, and served 15 years in the petroleum industry. He then returned to education once again, and earned both a Bachelor of Science and a Master of Science degree in Psychology from the University of Texas at Tyler. In 1986, he accepted a position of staff psychologist with the State of Texas. He retired in 1997 as Program Administrator for the mentally retarded offender program, Texas Department of Criminal Justice, and currently teaches psychology at Tyler Junior College, as an adjunct faculty member. In the spring of 2001, he was awarded the Doctor of Education degree with a major in Secondary and Higher Education by Texas A&M University at Commerce.

Texas Public Community College Black Male Graduation Rates for the Academic Years 1995-1996, 1996-1997 and 1997-1998

Institution	Black Male Enrollment	Black Male Graduations	Black Male Graduation Rate
Alamo CC Dist			
Northwest Vista	38	0	0.00
Palo Alto	237	3	1.27
San Antonio	534	6	1.12
St. Philip's	317	7	3.52
Alvin CC	329	34	10.33
Amarillo College	169	5	2.96
Angelina College	304	9	2.96
Austin CC	1312	26	1.98
Bee County Coll	262	5	1.91
Blinn College	767	27	3.52
Brazosport Coll	202	3	1.49
Central Texas College Dist	1204	246	20.43
Cisco JC	385	7	1.82
Clarendon Coll	122	5	4.10
College of the Mainland	380	22	5.79
Collin County CC Dist	267	5	1.87
Dallas County CC Dist			
Brookhaven Coll	511	15	2.94
Cedar Valley C	987	26	2.63
Eastfield Coll	937	21	2.24
El Centro Coll	970	32	3.30
Mountain View	1144	27	2.36
North Lake C	514	15	2.92
Richland Coll	1286	44	3.42
Del Mar College	128	5	3.91
El Paso County CC Dist	406	19	4.68
Frank Phillips C	72	2	2.78
Galveston Coll	233	11	4.72
Grayson County College	162	5	3.09

1

Hill College	160	7	4.38
Houston CC System	3822	78	2.04
Howard College	98	5	5.10
Kilgore College	421	15	3.56
Laredo CC	13	0	0.00
Lee College	1060	57	5.38
McLennan CC	480	18	3.75
Midland College	187	11	5.88
Navarro College	569	23	4.04
North Central Texas CC Dist	160	4	2.50
Northeast Texas CC	100	4	4.00
Odessa College	175	3	1.71
Panola College	187	7	3.74
Paris JC	329	7	2.13
Ranger College	257	4	1.56
San Jacinto College Dist			
Central Campus	314	13	4.14
North Campus	531	4	0.75
South Campus	207	3	1.45
South Plains Coll	273	10	3.66
Southwest Texas CC	19	3	15.79
Tarrant County CC Dist			
Northeast Camp	365	17	4.66
Northwest Camp	127	3	2.36
South Campus	1153	42	3.64
Temple College	215	8	3.72
Texarkana Coll	254	6	2.36
Texas Southmost College	7	0	0.00
Trinity Valley C	759	58	7.64
Tyler JC	1257	41	3.26
Vernon Regional JC	92	0	0.00
Victoria College	69	1	1.45

2

Weatherford Coll	109	1	0.92
Western Texas C	250	11	4.40
Wharton County JC	267	3	1.12

Top and Bottom Quartiles in Black Male Graduation Rate for the Academic Years 1995-1996, 1996-1997 and 1997-1998

Top Quartile		Bottom Quartile	
Institution	Graduation Rate	Institution	Graduation Rate
Central Texas College District	20.43	Collin County CC District	1.87
Southwest Texas JC	15.79	Cisco JC	1.83
Alvin CC	10.33	Odessa College	1.71
Trinity Valley CC	7.64	Ranger College	1.56
Midland College	5.88	Brazosport College	1.49
College of the Mainland	5.79	Victoria College	1.45
Lee College	5.38	San Jacinto, South Campus	1.45
Howard College	5.10	Alamo, Palo Alto Campus	1.27
Galveston College	4.72	Alamo, San Antonio Campus	1.12
El Paso County CC District	4.68	Wharton County JC	1.12
Tarrant, North East Campus	4.66	Weatherford College	0.92
Western Texas College	4.40	San Jacinto, North Campus	0.75
Hill college	4.38	Laredo CC	0.00
San Jacinto, Central Campus	4.14	Texas Southmost College	0.00
Clarendon College	4.10	Vernon Regional JC	0.00

Comparison of Top and Bottom Quartile Institutions Concerning General Student Retention Practices

Strategy	Top Quartile (TQ) % Yes	Bottom Quartile (BQ) % Yes	TQ Perceived Value to Retention (1-3)	BQ Perceived Value to Retention (1-3)
1. Basic skills testing	100	100	2.75	2.71
2. Class placement consistent with test scores	100	100	1.90	2.86
3. Orientation to classes	100	100	2.60	2.71
4. Orientation to extra-curricular activities	70	71	2.38	2.25
5. Freshman only advising	50	43	2.60	1.14
6. Tutorial programs	100	100	2.30	2.71
7. Job placement services	100	100	2.20	2.14
8. Work-study programs	100	100	2.40	2.57
9. Orientation for credit	50	29	2.60	2.50
10. Orientation for minorities only	0	0	- - -	- - -
11. Counseling services	100	100	2.70	2.57
12. Staff Development programs for retention enhancement	60	57	2.33	2.25
Preservation of standards urged	40	57	- - -	- - -

Comparison of Top and Bottom Quartile Institutions Concerning At-Risk Student Retention Practices

Strategy	Top Quartile (TQ) % Yes	Bottom Quartile (BQ) % Yes	TQ Perceived Value to Retention (1-3)	BQ Perceived Value to Retention (1-3)
1. Math and language developmental courses	100	100	2.00	2.57
2. Required tutorial programs	60	29	1.40	3.00
3. Individual counseling	90	86	2.43	2.80
4. Tracking test scores consistency with placement	80	71	2.62	2.20
5. Required meetings with advisor	40	14	3.00	3.00
6. Attendance monitoring	70	43	2.33	2.00
7. Retention strategies for minority groups only	30	14	3.00	2.00

The Retention of Black Male Students in Texas Public Community Colleges
(Survey)

Name _____ Title _____
Name of Institution _____
Address _____
Telephone Number _____ Email _____ Fax _____

Retention Strategies
The following questions are designed to determine what retention strategies your institution employs to increase graduation rates. Please mark your answer choice (yes or no) or fill-in a more complete response. If more space is needed, please append your answer on a separate sheet. If your answer to a question is "yes," please circle one of the numbers 1, 2 or 3, corresponding to that question. These numbers represent your opinion of how effectively that strategy contributes to student retention: 3 means most effective, 2 is somewhat effective and 1 is not effective.
Example: Does your institution match standard entrance test scores to course placement? Yes X No ___
(3) 2 1
This answer means you feel that this "matching" highly enhances retention.

Regarding student development, does your institution provide:
As a retention strategy: 3 = most effective; 2 = somewhat effective; 1 = not effective.
1. Basic skills testing? Yes ___ No ___ 3 2 1
Which tests are currently administered? _____
2. Class placement consistent with achievement in basic skills testing?
Yes ___ No ___ 3 2 1
3. Orientation to college classes? Yes ___ No ___ 3 2 1
4. Orientation to extra-curricular activities? Yes ___ No ___ 3 2 1
5. Freshmen only advising? Yes ___ No ___ 3 2 1
6. Tutorial programs? Yes ___ No ___ 3 2 1
7. Job placement services? Yes ___ No ___ 3 2 1
8. Work-study programs? Yes ___ No ___ 3 2 1
9. Orientation for credit? Yes ___ No ___ 3 2 1
10. Orientation for minorities? Yes ___ No ___ 3 2 1
If this answer is "Yes," please state which minority group(s) is/are targeted, and indicate the differences between general orientation and minority orientation.
_____
_____
_____.
If more space is needed for any question, please append your answer.

11. Counseling services? Yes ___ No ___ 3 2 1
Academic? Yes ___ No ___ 3 2 1
Financial? Yes ___ No ___ 3 2 1
Interventional? Yes ___ No ___ 3 2 1
Other _____ Yes ___ No ___ 3 2 1

12. Development programs for all staff, which include the importance of retention and graduation rate improvement? Yes ___ No ___ 3 2 1

If the answer is "Yes," has the preservation of standards been urged?
Yes ___ No ___

At-Risk Student Strategies

Does your institution identify at-risk students? Yes ___ No ___
If so, what are the categories?

_____

_____.

Do you employ:

1. Developmental course work in language and mathematics?
Yes ___ No ___ 3 2 1

2. Required tutorial programs? Yes ___ No ___ 3 2 1
If so, at what point? At enrollment ___ Upon scholastic probation ___
When recommended by faculty ___ Upon request ___ Other, please state
_____.

3. Individual counseling? Yes ___ No ___ 3 2 1
If so, at what point? At enrollment ___ Upon scholastic probation ___
When recommended by faculty ___ Upon request ___ Other, please state
_____.

4. Follow-up procedures to determine that registration and recommended instructional placement are consistent? Yes ___ No ___ 3 2 1
If registration and recommended instructional placement differ, what is the procedure of your institution? (please specify) _____
_____.

5. Periodic meetings with assigned advisor required?
Yes ___ No ___ 3 2 1
At what point? At enrollment ___ Upon scholastic probation ___ When recommended by faculty ___ Upon request ___ Other, please state _____
_____.

6. Attendance monitoring? Yes ___ No ___ 3 2 1
By whom? Faculty ___ Advisor ___ Other, please state _____

7. Do you employ any retention strategies targeted solely at specific racial or gender groups, even though others who are interested may participate?
Yes ___ No ___ 3 2 1
Which group(s)? _____.

8. Are the graduation rates of the targeted group(s) improved by this strategy?
Yes ___ No ___ 3 2 1

If your institution were to target black males as a group for graduation rate improvement, what would be the broad characteristics of this approach?

_____

_____

_____.

THE RETENTION OF BLACK MALE STUDENTS IN TEXAS PUBLIC COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Frank S. Glenn, Ed.D & Amy S. Glenn, Ed.D
Tyler Junior College

Study Purposes:

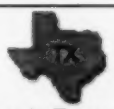
- Ascertain which Texas public community colleges have been able to graduate the highest percentages of black males
- Analyze factors contributing to the achievement of higher percentages of black males

What is the problem?

1. In the U.S.,

- African American students have been disproportionately more likely to enroll at community colleges vs. universities but ...
- They earn lower GPAs.
- They have higher attrition rates.
- They exhibit a lower rate of associate degree completion and transfer.

2. In Texas,



- The same trends hold true in Texas.
- The graduation rate of black males in community colleges is lower than that of white males.
- During the three-year period of this study, Texas public community colleges awarded academic associate degrees to only 2.4% of the black male students they enrolled as first-time degree-seeking freshmen.

3. The results of these trends are

- We do not reap maximum benefits from our community colleges when students fail to complete their course of study.
- Inadequately trained work force.
- The development of a permanent black economic underclass.
- The social difficulties of crime and poverty.

Situational reasons for the trends:

- Inadequate preparation for higher education in certain high schools
- Financial need, including stop-outs
- Undefined or unrealistic goals
- Detachment and isolation
- Lower socioeconomic background
- Lack of positive self-esteem
- External locus of control
- Low achievement motivations
- Cultural factors

Institutional reasons for the trends:

- Failure to accommodate minority needs
- Lower SAT scores & a lack of alternatives to standardized admission tests
- Flexibility in tuition payment & scheduling
- Employment of minority faculty
- Frustration and cost of remedial courses
- Rising tuition costs
- Lack of serious investment in equal opportunity by some institutions

Most of these approaches focus on why students drop out. The focus of this study is on what schools can do to retain.

Approaches to Retention

- Administrative Approach
  - policies, procedures and programs designed to meet the needs of students
  - includes counseling, scheduling, financial aid, payment terms, internships, housing arrangements, etc.

- Faculty Approach
  - methods that directly involve the faculty
  - includes hiring procedures, minority faculty recruitment, and ongoing assessment of teaching effectiveness

Research Questions:

- Which Texas public community colleges have the highest percentages of black male graduates?
- What are the features that differentiate between community colleges with higher graduation rates and those with lower graduation rates?

METHODOLOGY

1. Determination of Graduation Rates

- CoBoard data for academic years 1995-96, 1996-97, and 1997-98
- Determine graduation rate by dividing enrollment of first-time, black male, degree-seeking freshmen into number of black male students receiving academic degrees
- N=61, 9 campuses were excluded

2. Identification of Top & Bottom Quartiles

- The top quartile consisted of the most successful group of institutions in graduating black male students
- The bottom quartile was that group of institutions least successful

3. Development of Institutional Questionnaire

- Questionnaire to identify institutional policies and/or practices that affect the graduation rate, with specific attention directed to the factors that enhance the retention of black, male students
- Questionnaire piloted with three institutions for scope and clarity, then refined
- Included both forced-choice and open-ended questions addressing common retention practices

Case Two

DATA ANALYSIS

1. Questionnaires, Part 1

Institutional Practices for Retention

- Freshman-only advising programs
  - 50% TQ, 2.60 value
  - 43% BQ, 1.14 value
- Orientation for credit
  - 50% TQ, 2.50 value
  - 29% BQ, 2.50 value

4. Collection of Institutional Data

- Questionnaire mailed to the president of each institution ranked in the top and bottom quartiles
- Follow-up calls, letters, and emails
- Returns rate
  - 67% in top quartile
  - 47% in bottom quartile

5. Case Studies

- Qualitative case studies were conducted at one institution in both the top and bottom quartile
- Extensive data were gathered using
  - interviews
  - observations
  - printed materials

Case One

2. Questionnaires, Part 2

Retention Practices Targeting At-Risk Groups

- Only 70% of schools in both groups specifically identify at-risk students at initial enrollment
- Required tutorial programs
  - 60% TQ, 1.40 value
  - 29% BQ, 3.00 value

Questionnaires, Part 2, cont.

Retention Practices Targeting At-Risk Groups

- Required advising
  - 40% TQ, 3.00 value
  - 14% BQ, 3.00 value
- Monitor at-risk students
  - 70% TQ, 2.33 value
  - 43% BQ, 2.00 value

Questionnaires, Part 2, cont.

Retention Practices Targeting At-Risk Groups

- Specific retention strategies for at-risk students (financial, language)
  - 30% TQ, 3.00 value
  - 14% BQ, 2.00 value

3. Case Studies

The focus of the case studies was to examine the setting, policies, procedures, programs, and culture of each campus for clues concerning each institution's success with black male graduation.

Case One

- Faculty tries to assure incoming students that they are welcome and important to the institution.
- College maintains a continuing effort to promote student graduation.
- College stresses counseling and tutoring for at-risk students.
- An admissions committee ensures that any student with less than a "C" average is assigned specific strategies.

Case Two

- College utilizes counseling, mentoring, teaching assistants, & summer program to close gap between high school and college.
- Institution participates in federal grants to attract minority students to science & math.
- All classes include collaborative/interactive learning components to involve students.
- Orientation program stresses study skills, degree planning, and involvement.

Case Two, cont.

- College offers a cohort program.
- Student volunteers call each new student during the first semester.
- Institution sponsors several outreach efforts designed to recruit students in poor neighborhoods.

Case Study Comparison

- An emphasis on freshman orientation to help students feel welcome & important to the college.
- An emphasis on counseling and tutoring services for at-risk students.
- Utilization of a committee to ensure that any student with less than a "C" average is assigned a mentor, tutor, attendance monitoring, etc.
- A continuing effort to promote student graduation.

Two additional, perceived retention features of case one, not noted in case two, were a close knit, friendly campus culture and helpful instructors. These features, however, may not necessarily be implemented easily to other institutions.

Conclusions

- Student retention is a result of many factors. Only a limited number are under institutional control.
- Strategies are being employed by a much greater number of institutions in the top quartile than those in the bottom quartile. These include:
  - freshman-only advising
  - orientation for credit
  - required tutorial programs & advisor meetings for at-risk students
  - monitoring of at-risk student attendance
  - targeting minority groups with specific retention plans

The most influential institutional strategies concerning the retention of black male students are the measures designed to identify at-risk students at the time of enrollment and to monitor their academic progress, intervening when appropriate.

THE RETENTION OF BLACK MALE STUDENTS IN TEXAS PUBLIC COMMUNITY COLLEGES

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